

INFORMATION ITEM

2018 Priorities

Summary: This report discusses proposed Council staff priorities for 2018 to be carried out in addition to core program functions. The chief deputy executive officer and lead scientist will present the priorities and be available to answer questions from Council members.

Background

After seven years, the Council has made great strides in achieving its mission, however, significant opportunities for continued progress remain. Furthering the coequal goals is an ongoing, Council-led endeavor that requires leadership on multiple and complex issues. Much of our work will be completed with other local, State, and federal agency partners, through greater levels of collaboration and consensus for decision-making based on the best-available science.

Proposed 2018 Priorities

Starting with a review of progress on the 2017 priorities, staff developed the 2018 priority initiatives with three primary objectives in mind:

- **Strengthen and Implement the Delta Plan:** Continue focused efforts and work on amending Delta Plan chapters, as well as improving and strengthening tracking, reporting, and implementation of the Delta Plan consistent with the Delta Reform Act and State regulatory requirements.
- **Build Capacity for One Delta, One Science:** Continue building the Delta-wide science community by hosting the 2018 Bay-Delta Science Conference and other forums to communicate the latest science; convene independent peer-review and synthesis panels that uphold a strong standard of scientific excellence; and advance the scientific understanding of the Delta through critical science investigations.
- **Enhance Council Leadership and Communications:** Continue to further the role and mission of the Council through development of a strategic plan and operations plan that will guide staff activities for the next five-years; based on that, develop a communications and public participation plan to foster inclusive and open engagement in Delta stewardship.

See Attachment 1 for a graphical depiction of the 2018 Priorities.

STRENGTHEN AND IMPLEMENT THE DELTA PLAN

- **Complete the Conveyance, Storage Systems, and Operation of Both (CSO); Delta Levees Investment Strategy (DLIS); and Performance Measures Amendments:** We will complete the three amendments to the Delta Plan that address CSO, DLIS, and Performance Measures with the anticipated certification of the environmental analysis and final adoption of the amendments expected in April 2018.
- **Advance the Ecosystem Amendment:** The Delta Plan acknowledges that State agencies cannot – and should not – try to turn back the clock and re-create the historical Delta ecosystem. We can, however, restore specific areas and ecological functions for native species, taking into consideration changes that have occurred in the past, current land and water uses, and the future impact of climate change and other factors. Through a public process that began in October 2017 and will last through the early part of 2019, the Council will work with partner agencies, stakeholders, and the public to amend Chapter 4 of the Delta Plan, including completion of required environmental review.
- **Initiate and Complete the Delta Plan Five-Year Review:** The Council is required (Water Code Section 85300 (c)) to review the Delta Plan at least once every five years and may revise it as deemed appropriate. To this end, staff has initiated an assessment and evaluation of the Delta Plan, to review plan performance and identify priorities for future revisions.
- **Evaluate and Strengthen the Council's Regulatory Role for Covered Actions:** Staff are continuing to support Delta Plan consistency certification of covered actions with early consultation, science support, comments on California Environmental Quality Act documents, trainings for agencies and citizen groups, and the online certification system. We will continue to improve coordination of State agencies' regulatory activities affecting Delta projects.
- **Develop Climate Vulnerability Assessment for the Delta:** Best available science continues to improve our understanding of the effects of climate change on the environment. Staff will explore the development of a climate change vulnerability assessment for the Delta in order to deepen our understanding of the likely ramifications of climate change and sea-level rise in the Delta.
- **Improve Council's Ability to Track and Report on Delta Plan Performance and Implementation:** While we are continuing to refine the Delta Plan's performance measures (see Amendments, above), we are also tracking administrative performance measures, funding, programs, and related activities in the Delta to inform the success of Delta Plan policies and recommendations. The Council provides several public-facing database systems to track Delta Plan implementation, and in 2018 we will further incorporate best practices for environmental data management. In addition, the Delta Plan identifies output and

outcome performance measures to track the impacts and effects of the Delta Plan. These indicators are heavily reliant on quantifiable targets and data analysis from our partner agencies. As a result, the Council will develop a user-friendly reporting system for the output and outcome performance measures that sets a reference for future implementation of the Plan and related activities.

BUILD CAPACITY FOR ONE DELTA, ONCE SCIENCE

- **Initiate and Complete the Delta Science Plan Five-Year Review:** The Delta Science Plan is a shared vision and living framework for promoting collaborative science and accelerating the discovery of new understanding. It includes a list of 31 actions that strengthen the organization and communication of science and is one element of a three-part planning, implementation, and reporting strategy for Delta science which also includes the Science Action Agenda and the *State of Bay-Delta Science*. The Delta Science Plan was completed in December 2013. During 2018 the Delta Science Program will lead the review and update of the Delta Science Plan using a comprehensive and collaborative approach with substantial stakeholder input.
- **Sponsor the 2018 Bay-Delta Science Conference:** In support of advancing best available science in the Delta, we will co-sponsor and co-coordinate this year's 10th Biennial Bay-Delta Science Conference, which will showcase the latest scientific information about the Bay-Delta system to improve water and environmental decision-making.
- **Identify and Pursue Funding for Critical Science:** The 2017-2021 Science Action Agenda identified 13 priority science actions that fill critical gaps in Delta science to glue together disparate pieces of the complex science enterprise and advance the vision of "One Delta, One Science". With the identification of these critical science opportunities comes the need for funding to implement research, advance synthesis, and build science infrastructure. Staff will work to identify and pursue funding for critical science that fills in the gaps and creates the glue to further scientific knowledge of the Delta. One component of this critical infrastructure that will benefit both collaborative science and assessment of our efforts is the development of tools to track science efforts within the Delta.
- **Develop an Adaptive Management Forum:** One of the substantial challenges to achieving the coequal goals is the dynamic nature of the Delta and the great uncertainty that comes with this continual variability. The predominant way to overcome this challenge, however, is to build science and experience into management practices through the use of adaptive management. The Delta Science Program will sponsor an Adaptive Management Forum to provide adaptive management training to build capacity for planning and implementing adaptive management and share lessons learned from the Delta and elsewhere.
- **Finalize the Draft Water Supply Adaptive Management Framework and Begin to Develop Implementation Plan:** The first draft of the Water Supply Adaptive Management Framework, as called for in the Delta Science Plan, is

nearing completion and currently undergoing internal review. In 2018, the Framework will be vetted with the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB) and stakeholders as the foundation of a forthcoming water supply adaptive management implementation plan.

- **Lead Integrated Ecosystem Modeling Efforts to Support Decision-Making:** Following the 2016 Science Enterprise Workshop, co-hosted by the Council and U.S. Geological Survey, the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) endorsed a set of recommendations to support a strong science enterprise. One of the top recommendations was to further strengthen decision-making with integrated modeling and forecasting. The Delta Science Program launched an “Integrated Modeling Steering Committee” in 2017 to bring together public and private sector modelers, model-users and decision-makers. The steering committee will develop a set of pilot projects to support decision-making and will continue to report progress to the DPIIC in 2018.
- **Provide Independent Peer Review, Advice, and Synthesis Services to Support State and Federal Agencies:** The Delta Science Plan emphasizes the importance of independent peer review for increasing the credibility of scientific information for decision-making. Independent peer review plays a key role in determining best available science; open and transparent peer review helps build trust and improves the quality and applicability of science. Independent scientific advice is a companion to peer review and uses outside experts to provide guidance at key points in project planning, implementation, or evaluation. In 2018, the Delta Science Program will continue to provide independent scientific peer review, advice and synthesis services to support state and federal agencies’ decision-making.
- **Provide Science-Support for EcoRestore Adaptive Management Program:** In 2018, the Delta Science Program, in collaboration with other State agencies, will continue to play a lead role in development of an adaptive management program for EcoRestore and other restoration work in the Delta, per the recommendations in the EcoRestore Adaptive Management Program White Paper.

ENHANCE COUNCIL LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS

- **Strengthen State and Federal Agency Coordination through the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee:** The DPIIC serves as a forum to discuss, consider, and orchestrate the timely and orderly implementation of actions identified in the Delta Plan and Delta Science Plan. It strives to facilitate maximum government efficiency, provide leadership and accountability, and highlight where agency alignment will have the greatest positive impact. Meetings will be held in April and November, with priority-focused discussions on ecosystem restoration, science-support for decision making, science governance, agricultural sustainability, and climate change, among other topics.

- **Develop a Five-year Strategic and Operations Plan:** Created in 2009 by the Delta Reform Act, the Council has accomplished many of the mandates in the Delta Reform Act. As the agency continues to evolve, it is time for the Council to develop a 5-year strategic and operations plan to guide its future efforts and better position the Council as the leader in facilitating the achievement of the coequal goals. Staff anticipates that this plan will include an executive team training program and succession planning for key staff and leadership.
- **Develop Communications, Outreach, and Public Participation Plan:** Since the Council's inception, its communication and outreach efforts have focused on informing stakeholders of meetings, events, and research publications -- a very internal approach to communication. As the agency evolves it's time to consider how the Council can enhance its position as a leader in the Delta to communicate about, provide outreach to, and engage the public in the achievement of the coequal goals. As an example, one of the goals of the Department of Fish and Wildlife's Delta Conservation Framework is to "support and expand existing public education programs and run state and national outreach campaigns focused on Delta values and ecosystem conservation."

CORE FUNCTIONS

In addition to this year's major initiatives, we will continue to perform the core staff functions that support Delta Plan and Delta Science Plan implementation. By attending to these fundamental responsibilities, the Council fulfills its duty to coordinate the Delta Plan's implementation and the Delta Science Program's long-standing duties.

- **Legislative and Policy Analysis:** Continue to ensure that the Council is kept apprised of major legislative and policy initiatives at State and federal levels that would impact the Council's work.
- **Communications and External Affairs:** Meeting support, the development of an annual report, other publications, video blogs, factsheets, and website updates, and presentations; as well as science communications support for seminars, brown bags, symposia.
- **Administration and Human Resources:** Support for contracting and administration of interagency programs, including budgeting and human resources development.
- **Council, Delta ISB, and DPIIC Support:** Support for meetings of the Council, the Delta ISB, and DPIIC include logistics, preparing reports and briefing panels, and post meeting follow-up.
- **Other Activities:** Attention will also be paid to other activities that advance the Delta Plan, as time and resources allow. Emerging opportunities or circumstances may necessitate responses by the Council that could shift emphases. As Council staff track other activities that affect the Delta, we will alert the Council to actions that may significantly affect Delta Plan implementation, so that priorities can be adjusted as necessary.

Fiscal Information

2018 Priorities are within the Council's existing budget for FY 17/18 and FY 18/19. Where necessary, Council staff will contract with outside experts and consultants to assist on work products.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: 2018 Priorities Factsheet

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